



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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## **\$3.1 million in federal grants boost Washington's specialty crops**

**OLYMPIA** – The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) received word today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved the state's application for \$3.1 million in grant funding for projects to support the state's fruit, vegetable and horticulture growers. The USDA Special Crop Block Grant will fund 20 projects managed by the department and other Washington organizations to benefit the third largest specialty crop industry in the nation. Awards for individual projects range from \$62,000 to \$250,000.

"These federal dollars will help us support our fruit and vegetable farmers' top priorities for research and marketing," said Gov. Chris Gregoire. "We're fighting to create jobs all across Washington, and while agriculture continues to be a bright spot for economic development, we can't take it for granted. By investing in the future of our farm economy, we're planting the seed for a bountiful harvest."

"These projects will help our agricultural community manage some of its most pressing needs," said WSDA Director Dan Newhouse. "As we evaluated the many worthy proposals, we selected projects that were most likely to improve the profitability and viability of Washington fruit and vegetable growers."

Commodity commissions, agricultural associations, Washington State University and WSDA programs will receive grant funds. Project work is to be completed from one to three years. A full list of projects is available on the WSDA grant program website at [agr.wa.gov/Grants/SCBGP.aspx](http://agr.wa.gov/Grants/SCBGP.aspx).

Examples include projects that will: increase grower implementation of Good Agricultural Practices that reduce the risk of foodborne illness and allow farms to sell to institutional buyers; develop alternative management tools to control potato nematodes; and support small-scale growers' efforts to sell directly to consumers at farmers markets and through farm subscriptions.

The federal block grant program was designed to provide grants to states solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture. Additional information is available on the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service website at [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgrp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgrp).

In awarding these funds, WSDA selected projects that build on the expertise and success of the industry, make a meaningful contribution to the viability of fruit, vegetable and horticulture production and have the potential to support the largest number of producers. Projects that included matching funds by the applicant were given

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priority; all of the 2011 awards include matching funds or in-kind donations provided by the applicant.

WSDA conducted a competitive solicitation process to award the funding. Earlier this year, WSDA received 78 pre-proposals requesting funding in excess of \$12 million. After reviewing 43 full proposals, a 15-member industry review panel selected the most promising projects for inclusion into the state's single grant application. USDA has approved Washington's application, clearing the way for the projects to move forward.

Later this year, WSDA's 2012 Specialty Crop Block Grant application materials will be posted on its grant website at [www.agr.wa.gov/grants](http://www.agr.wa.gov/grants).

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